

Reunion Picnic Returns

Fisher's Hill Battlefield Hosts Civil War Event

By **KELLY CLARK**

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A gathering that started as a reunion for Civil War veterans is returning to the Fisher's Hill Battlefield on Saturday after an 11-year hiatus.

The Fisher's Hill Picnic runs from 4 to 8 p.m. at Ramseur's Hill at 1864 Battlefield Road in Strasburg.

The free picnic features battlefield tours led by national park rangers and a commemorative program at 7 p.m.

Visitors can also make 19th century fishing poles and handmade ice cream.

Rob Aitcheson, director of policy and communications for the Shenandoah Valley Battle-

fields Association, said the program is a continuation of the reunion picnics between Union and Confederate veterans that the battlefield hosted after the Civil War ended in 1865.

"It was a really unifying thing for the nation," Aitcheson said.

Shenandoah County Tourism Director Jenna French said visitors can bring their own food or purchase it from the Powhatan Ruritan Club at the battlefield.

French said the picnic's return will serve as an end to the Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration.

"This year marks the 150th anniversary of Appomattox and the end of the war," she said. "So the focus now is on the aftermath.

"We just thought that with

the timing of the sesquicentennial and the end of the war, that this was a way of tying everything together with one final event."

Aitcheson hopes the program shows visitors the significance of the old reunions as a reminder that reconciliation is possible even after the most violent of wars.

"It's hard to find in the entire scope of world history," he said, "After such an intense and bloody conflict, after a matter of years, veterans on both sides helped the nation heal.

"It's something that we can show the world. We can move forward ... and learn from the mistakes of the past."

For more information about the Fisher's Hill picnic, visit www.shenandoahatwar.org.

Contact Kelly Clark at 574-6290 or kclark@dnronline.com